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M1457A17
1894

POEMS

BY MORSE
MACDONALD





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POEMS

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By MOSSE MACDONALD.

A. D. INNES & CO.

31 & 32, BEDFORD STREET, STRAND.

MDCCCXCIV.

UNWIN BROTHERS, THE GRESHAM PRESS, CHILWORTH AND LONDON.

PR

4970

M 1457, A17

1804

TO MY FATHER.

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IONA.

The ruin on the Islet of my lay
Hath window tracery ; the glass is gone
Whose hues so marred the light that on them shone,
That it would pass ensanguined on its way.
So now it streams unhindered to the floor,—
Gold unalloyed,—and bears from Heaven a smile
Without a single blush, to cheer the aisle.
O Poesy ! if on me thou deignst to pour,
Ere thou dost thrid the broken tracery
Of these my lines, I would break down amain
All a dull heart would interpose, of stain
Or alien hue, to mask thy purity.
O that herein self were forgotten so
That they who read, thy Light alone might know !

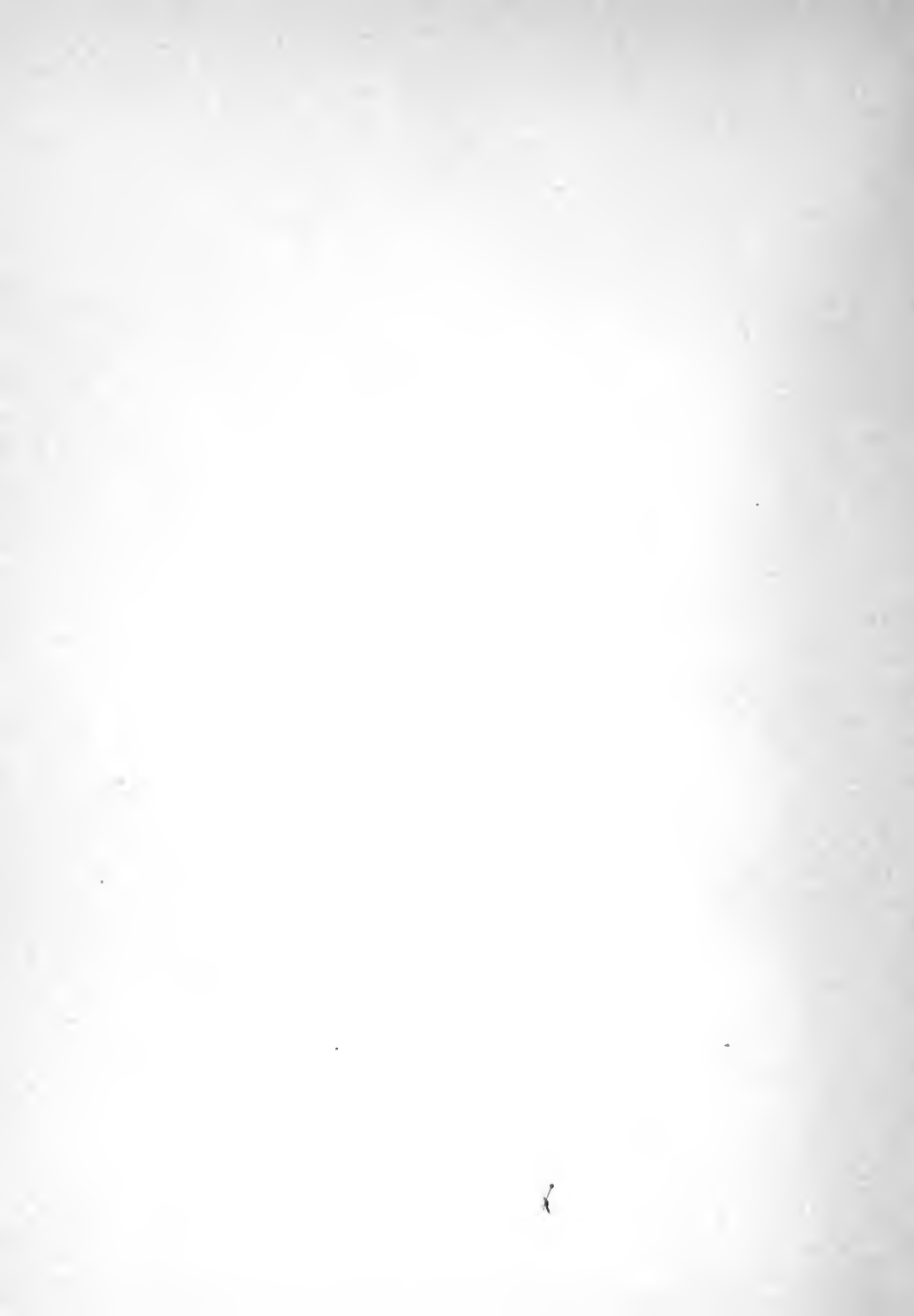
VIRO REVERENDO AEDVINO AELMER HARDING, A.M.,
COLLEGII SŒCTI AEDANI PRÆSVLI.

'Cuius doctrinam id maxime commendat omnibus, quod non aliter
quam vivit cum suis ipse docet.'

*En ego, qui quondam celebravi nomen IONÆ,
Inter 'CVLTORES' frater adesse vocor!
Quid merui,—nisi quod cellam vitæque Columbæ
Cantavi,—Aeduni servus ut ipse siem?
Augurio vitæ fuerit scripsisse futura
Carmen;—primitias accipe discipuli.*

*Vir Academicæ nostræ decus ipse canebat
Fluctigenam Staffam, litora plena Deo;
Ante oculos Antrum vidit, crepuitque Theatrum,
Per cuneos voces concinuere freti.
Cernere erat Templum, structasque adamante columnas,
Mille maris laudes, Oceanique preces,
Fundeant opera ipsa Dei 'Benedicite' in aures,
Explicuitque elegos Omnipotentis amor.*

*Est in conspectu Staffæ, regna inter aquarum,
Insula jussa olim pro Cruce magna pati;
Diligit hanc Deus ante alias, propriamque dicavit,
Huc vexilla Crucis rubra Columba tulit.
Candida militiam DOMINI testatur arena,
Stant testes fidei templa, sepulchra, cruces;
Adstant præsidio Cyclopes, amplexatur æstus,
Vis tempestatum litora sancta fovet;
Litora sancta super brumæ deflentur honores,
Æstatisque jubar fit diadema loco.
Hic tranquilla latet, tantos perpessa dolores,—
Mane exspectantem pax tenet ipsa Dei.
'O ter felices,—spinas mutare coronis,
Martyriis palmis volnera, pace dolos!
O ter felices,'—vox est trans sæcla Columbæ,—
'Quis datur in CHRISTO vivere, amare, pati!'*
Kal. Dec. mdcccxcij.



*'Namque notavi
Ipse locum.'*

IONA.

OFF Ulva, warring with Atlantic brine,
The Isles of Treshnish lie in battle line,
Fantastic shapes that brood upon the seas
To watch the sleep of silent centuries.
A few leagues onward, Staffa lies alone,
The foam-robed Maiden of the columned zone.
To eastward Mull, a vanguard of the coast,
Breaks the wild onset of the cresting host
Whose waves, like knights defeated in tourney,
Tilt at the sea-wall, and are lost in spray.—
Here is the home of Storm. In Morven's hall
The winds are ever holding festival,
And Nature casts from off her shoulders bare
The tartan that the braes of Moidart wear,
And rock and strath and tide alone remain
Lords of the Isles within that wild domain.

Long since Clanranald to the flame gave o'er
His Castle Tyram, and returned no more.
Long since the outlawed heir of Scotland's throne
Went wandering through these Isles, that were his own.

Prince Charlie and brave Flora are forgot,—
Sped to the country where men wander not.

From rocky Duart, from Mingarry grey,
The terror of the clans has passed away.
They sleep, the plaided warriors of Maclean,
Where dust of battle may not rise again.
Sheathed is the claymore, vanished from the sea
The white-winged pride of Ocean Chivalry ;
Hushed is the slogan, bloodless flow the waves,
And Death seems buried in those island Graves !

BUT when I sighted on the horizon dim
That line of grey that broke the Ocean rim
Hard by the land of Mull, though deep the spell
That on uncovered head in Staffa fell,
Now memories tenderer far came over me,—
It was the Cloister of the Western Sea !
The Land whose Voice, a thousand years ago,
Startled Strath Clyde, where eyes would overflow
Beneath the Cross, till Heathenesse was won
By the great love of Him Who hung thereon.
Yes, 'twas the Isle that sent in saintly hands
The torch of Learning into these dark lands,
Kindled afar ; the Shore that even yet
Bears silent witness to an unpaid debt
To Erin ;

 there IONA lay at rest,
A lonely sleeper on the Ocean's breast,
Deaf to the wailing that the tempests make,
Storms shall not wake her, till her dead awake.

NOW ere the sails of Fancy are unfurled
 To waft thee northward to yon Ocean world,
 Be thine to break, if thou wouldst fare with me,
 The chain of pride, the gyves of luxury ;
 For to the gaze of the ambitious mind
 Poor is IONA, and the shore unkind.
 But if enamoured of the meek estate
 Which chooses rather to be good than great,
 Like music heard from far shall be her name,
 Thy heart shall glow, thy every thought be flame !

Wordsworth, whose tranquil song was wont to glass
 As in a summer loch, peak, crag, and pass,
 The shimmering birks, the foaming of the rills,
 And all the glories of my Scotland's hills,—
 Her woodland grace, her highland majesty
 Mantled in purple, soaring to the sky,
 Her glens, low nestling under castle walls,
 Hushed by the melody of waterfalls,—
 He gazed upon IONA, and the sight
 Waked in that reverent heart serene delight.
 Keats turned for once into the wilderness,
 Great Johnson did not scorn the palmer's dress,
 Seeking the Shrine of those forgotten seas
 That glitter round the clustering Hebrides.
 Nor they alone ; and, as the restless tide
 As oft caresses as deserts her side,
 Hearts of departing Pilgrims towards her yearn,
 They leave IONA, only to return.

FRINGING the shores that face Mull's mountain
lands,
Beneath the Manse the glistening hamlet stands.
Yonder, behind the shelter of the hill
A high-road built by hermits, threading still
The cots of islanders who never roam
From the bare island that they call their home,—
Will lead thee through a mile of pasture-land,
And show thee Ocean from the western strand.

There sits enthroned beneath the Abbot's Mound,
A silent watcher by the silent sound,
Saint Mary's Tower : but only sea-birds' cry
Breaks the grey stillness of the sanctuary.
Clear chanted hymns no more the waters cross,
Returned in antiphon from yonder Ross
Of terraced Mull, nor galleys any more
Grate on the shingle of the holy shore,
Bearing the chieftain and the king to rest
Far from the wars, on calm IONA'S breast.
But she is severed from the world's highways,
And all in vain these shores, that homeward gaze
Across to Scotland, call on us to come
And build again Columba's wasted home.
Spirits, that haunt the ruin by the shore,
IONA is forgotten ; hope no more !

But Hope-kept vigil in the pilgrim's breast
Upon the silent sands that face the West.
For there before his eye the Atlantic spread

IONA.

From silver shore to evening's couch of red.
From evening's couch unto the silver shore
A street of light swept up to Heaven's high Door,
The Sun himself that way with gold did pave,
His touch illumining the dark sea-wave.
Then knew I who it is that lights a way
For saints at even to the Gate of Day.
Surely, IONA, all thy glorious past
Shall not compare with that which comes at last !

There is in sight a spot where seraphs fall,
Nor deem that they have trod the earth at all ;
So to Schihallion's corries floats a cloud,
Moving unseen beneath night's starry shroud.
So peaceful is it, that our cities seem,
To one who waits there, like a weary dream.
On yonder hill, they tell, when day was late,
The angels on Columba loved to wait.
So the Belovèd once on Patmos kneeled,
And saw entranced the Four Last Things revealed.

O great Columba ! like the evening star,
Whose lamp is bright, although it burns from far,
Fresh down the ages is the memory
To those who fain would follow after thee,
Of those who toiled, amid Northumbria's pain,
To bring the Briton back to God again !
Methinks I see them in the isle they found,
Taming with gentle toil the rugged ground ;
Then hieing to their wicker cells to sing
Songs of the reapers in God's harvesting.—

Not for themselves they freely gave away
The flowers that others cull on Life's highway ;
Not for themselves or any worldly good
They left behind Earth's gems of maidenhood
For other hands to gather, rendering
The wealth of love He lent them to their King ;
But as they brighter glowed, their heart of fire
Suffered no wayward runlet of desire
Melt from the height of their cold life of snow,
Into the bosom of the vale below.
Each life a poem, every death a prayer,
Quenched though their censers, perfume lades the air.
To them the path of dying, this life done,
Led, like an isthmus, to a brighter one ;
Dearer than home to sailors come from far,
Wearily resting, harboured from the war
That Ardnamurchan and the Ocean wage
In Tobermory's leafy anchorage ;
Rest after toil is theirs for evermore,
Sweet consolation on a quiet shore !

SO wast thou chosen in our land's twilight
To guard the saint and feed the anchorite,
Least of the Isles ! when Erin's princely son
Came to thy shore to woo, and thou wast won.
Oh surely 'twas thy great humility
That brought the Bridegroom's Friend to honour
thee !
Hither he sailed, and chose not Oransay,
Where men can gaze at Erin far away,

Lest earth-born mists should gather in his eyes,
And dim them for his holy enterprise.
Him on an embassy had angels sent,
Though Earth, that knew not, called it banishment.

So on he sailed, and passed thy sisters by,
Wonders of isles, that met his awestruck eye.
No veil from Heaven on green Islay fell,
Nor cloud to curtain Jura's citadel,—
He saw them all, but longing turned to thee,
Blest above all the islands of the sea !

Yet Arran would have made a statelier bride,
The eternal warder of the lordly Clyde ;
Like a great Brooch of Lorne she gems the sea,
Clasping the folds of Ocean drapery.
And who would call IONA, lying low,
The peer of Goatfell of the granite brow ?
Yet in the murmur of her holy well
Glen Rosa's shadows of Columba tell.

And the Great Architect, Who loveth best
Amid His mighty works the lowliest,
Who, though He builded on Creation's morn
Staffa, that laughs e'en Roslin's shafts to scorn,
Showed her but yesterday to human eye,
For that He needs not man's poor flattery ;
Content, if on her adamantine floor
His Godhead echoes in the breakers' roar ;

If all along the coast white choirs of waves
 Thunder His glory in a thousand caves,—
 Yet does He cherish thy lorn precinct well,
 Oh quiet island of Columba's cell,
 Enthroned within yon temple of the sea,
 He watches Scotland while He loveth thee !

THE crypt of Time is full of echoings
 Of old-world faiths and half-forgotten things,
 Of Druids gazing at the Morning Star,
 Of Ninian carrying the Cross from far,
 While yet IONA deep in shadow lay,
 Waiting the coming of Columba's day.
 It came, and straight the heralds wander forth
 Beyond the friths and glens of the wild North.
 Columba's loud voice makes the mountains ring,
 Crying to Alban of her rightful King.
 A new Iona off Northumbria lay,
 Who could despair when Aidan led the way ?
 Soon at their call the far-off South should rise,
 As morning light unlocks a sleeper's eyes !—
 But Rome, who once from old-world armoury
 Had built straight roads for Christ to travel by,
 Was crying in Bernicia loud and long.—
 —Now seemed there to be discord in the song
 That in the North sad missionaries sang
 Till *Nunc Dimittis* in IONA rang.

High Whitby, frowning on the German sea,
 I heard IONA's voice, forgiving thee !

Let echo take it over moor and tarn,
To Hilda's home and lowly Lindisfarne ;
Complaining not if, as with two-edged sword
That flamed both North and South, one common

Lord

Fought with thy heathen by the hands of twain,
The sundered sisters kiss in peace again.
Yes! for the rival founts are blent in one,
And Lightfoot sits in Cuthbert's ancient throne.

HOW changed the Isle, when from her fevered
rest

Rome bade her wake, the Glory of the West!
With such rare grace replenishing the shore,
The Saint returning scarce had known her more ;
For all her pomp, the Island of his care
Were not so fair to him, though passing fair!
He would have deemed IONA'S heart was bent
On fondly lavishing vain ornament
Upon the cross, for everywhere it rose,
The token of a slumberer's repose,
Of tracery tall, of exquisite design,
With pride of arabesque and charm of line.
But now, save only at the Nunnery,
And where Saint Oran's ruins stand hard by,
Gone are these jewels of IONA'S plain,
Gone, like the altar marble of her fane.

When after great affliction sleep comes on
And lends a sufferer brief oblivion,

Quenched though the smart, though charmed the torture now,
Racked are the features, marred the wan, white brow ;
So, in her rest which nought may break again,
IONA'S face is haunted by her pain.
Shame on the hands that seized with bigot pride
What Art had graced and Age had sanctified !
Lo, where the Viking spared, avenging zeal
Has made a wound that Time can never heal,
Where the old splendours of her Margaret's rule
Lie wrecked upon the shore, yet beautiful.

LET the Cross crumble, so the dust proclaim
Confessor's victory and hero's fame !
'Tis not on relics that the saints depend
For immortality when labours end !
They lose no honour who on Nebo die,
GOD'S sunsets leave no scar upon the sky.
Think ye the dead are angered in their sleep
Because for them a world has ceased to weep ?
Or dream less calmly, though upon the tomb
Myrtle and amaranth forget to bloom ?

Love burns upon her own no jealous brand,
Children are drawn to her with gentle hand ;
Then, softly limnèd on each happy brow,
Glistens her sign a moment, snow on snow.
Soon it must vanish ;—is the little one
Wiped from Love's roll because the print is gone ?

No, christened Islet ! and the hope that laid
The first kiss on thy brow shall never fade.
Though dust thy crosses, gone thy diadem,
Shall saints, who live for ever, weep for them ?
Mourn not if Northmen or if Danish horde
Harried thy silver shore with heathen sword ;
Mourn not the flight of thy blest ' Family '
From robbers of the Scandinavian sea !
Mourn not, if like a dove upon the wind
The Saint has passed and left no trace behind,
If naught but coast and islet are the same
As on the morning when Columba came !

HE did not fear for her the death of Time,
Singing her future in his simple rhyme :
*' Isle of my heart, Isle that it loveth so,
Where chaunts the monk, only the kine shall low ;
Yet before Heaven shall wax and Earth shall wane,
Iona, as she was, shall be again ! '*
'Tis even so ! for to the farthest clime,
Columba's Voice has pierced the vault of Time ;
And now are sprinkled with her morning dew
Nations the gentle Aidan never knew ;
Adamnan lives, though ages since have rolled,
And the white hand of Oswald grows not old,
While to IONA, in her storm-girt home
Waiting the Resurrection, voices come
Telling of lives beyond the seas laid down,
Of Selwyn worthy of the martyr crown.

Yea, round the islet rings a requiem,
The solitary place is glad for them !

NOW from her ambush 'mid the ranks of graves
Crept Sleep unchallenged, save by trembling
waves ;

Against the hamlet in most gentle raid
She marshalled all the Dreams, and prisoners made
Of all things round me, and I was alone ;
So to the Minster's gloom I wandered on,
And childhood's sleep could not comparèd be
To lone IONA'S pure tranquillity.
But little warrant had I, thus to tread
Upon that holy ground of happy dead.
For lo ! embraced by faëry mists, the capes
Of that bleak land had lost their cruel shapes,
And soon at Fancy's bidding, Twilight's wand
Had made the wilderness a lotus-land,
And dared IONA'S pilgrim to beguile
With dreamy languor of a Circe's Isle.
Oh that this heart on that fair eve had been
Attuned to all around, or that the scene
Had lured to earth high thoughts I seemed to see
Burn out o'erhead, like meteors, lost to me !

I stood within the Chancel ; then a Voice :
'The Dead must slumber ; 'tis the living's choice
To live a life that Death shall claim alone,
Or war high warfare ere the day is done.

Leave us to sleep ; our rest thou canst not share ;
Speed to the weary world, the Saints are there !
There as Love labours, softening hearts of flint,
GOD's current coin is stamped in Trial's mint
With character that overcomes the world.
And since Earth's scroll is nearly all unfurled,
And Time is old, and soon the grave shall close,
The sons of Life disdain the unearned repose
Of cloister burial, but man with man
They pass to slumber, fighting in the van !'

I heard no more ; but in the aisle, as one
Kneels after vespers, though the priest be gone,
Aslant the altar-step there lurked a ray,
A laggard vassal in the train of Day ;
But quick it hurried out beyond our West
To run new errands at the Dawn's behest,
To drink the tear that glistened all night long
In floweret's eye, and wake the lark to song !—

BUT I, a shamed intruder, stole away
To where the sea caresses Martyrs' Bay.
Silver-rimmed ripples ran to meet the sand,
That snowy frontal of a widowed land.
E'en as the strong most keenly feel for grief,
The rude Atlantic round IONA's reef
Rolled silent in, and hardly seemed to sigh,
Shamed into calm for very sympathy,
While wreaths of mist that caught the Even's smile
Became an aureole above the Isle.

Never on Scotland's waters floated night
Fairer than then ; the sinking Lord of light
And his pale heiress in her crescent chair
Seemed to divide the sceptres of the air
Between them, and the lingering afterglow,
Like that strange light upon a dying brow,
Amazed the stars ; it seemed nor night, nor day,
Rapt, as in mystic trance, IONA lay.

POEMS.

AMEN COURT.

HARD by to Paternoster Row
A stone, set in a house, doth show,
Graven with golden words from Paul,
How Christ by rising raised us all.
Alack, it might as well be dumb
For all the crowds that go and come !
For as I passed I marked that it
Did wear its text in Latin writ,
And none save few those words could spell,
By scholar-mason cut so well.

Then did I praise the charity
Which me did rede Latinity,
Of founders and mine own dear folk
Who sent me erst to learn my boke
Of priests within the minster town
Of Austin's cell and Becket's crown,
And made me clerk instead of clown,

And thence to school at Oxenford,—
For this good deed assoil them, Lord !

NOW as I passed up Holborn way
My heart unto mine head 'gan say,
'Good head, the doctrine on yon wall
Profits wayfarers nought at all,
For brightest candle dies beneath
A bushel, as a Scripture saith,
And all the learning on the stone
Is smothered in a tongue unknown.
Methinks the proof of growth in wit
Is in the use men make of it ;
If, in thy house of life, one stone
Be given thee to carve thereon,
To edify the folk that gaze
Upon the building of thy days,
Be simple in what thou hast to say,
For simple folk throng life's highway,
And all are pilgrims to one home,
So hold them brethren, all and some.
For knowledge puffs the knower up,
And maketh but a bitter cup
For minds athirst, unless it be
Flavoured with blessed charity.
And since in streets all said and sung
Is sung or said in the vulgar tongue,
And that men use to speak it too
To buy and sell, and weep and woo,

So let thy hoard of learning be
Made current by simplicity,
Even as merchants' marks, displayed
In meaner coin for use of trade;
—Then use thy wit and carve amain :
The stone shall not cry out in vain !'

ON A LADY'S VIOLIN.

LONG, long ago, this priceless thing
Grew strong, amid the feathered quire,
In leafy shades whose whispering
Made all the tree-top seem a lyre.
Prophetic sang the forest breeze,
How from the heart of ancient trees
A violin should come to birth
And teach the tongues of heaven on earth.

Sad years have mellowed its long life
To sweetness ; built when Charles was king
'Mid discord of Italian strife
It dared high harmony to sing.
But after storm, what gentler rest
Than where its frame is lightly prest,—
A maiden's bosom, skilled to make
Its heart to tremble for her sake !

Its voice is wheresoe'er she stays,
She is not known where it is mute.
As Cicily on organs plays,
Or as Apollo wears a lute,

Or as her wheel in paintings fine
Makes men discern pure Catherine,
So they who hear this viol play
Cry, 'Nora is not far away !'

Then straight in quest of her they go,
And gather round her, where she stands
Quickening the nerves with quivering bow,
A realm of sound in her young hands ;—
One wields the sceptre, swift and fine,
The other moves from line to line,
Assessing with unconscious care
Æolian tribute of the air.

If the maid mourns, when others fain
Would sit apart, and rock and cry
These strings tell all the house her pain,
Setting her woe to melody :
And as the healing tones take wing,
They steal the tears that made them sing ;
And sacred, whosesoe'er it be,
Is music that sets sad hearts free !

Sometimes the maid rejoices so
That weak words fail, so glad is she !
Then is her pent heart's overflow
Released by music's ecstasy,—
Music, that schools the maiden mind
To passion, teaching it to find
High thoughts, which make life holy ground
Enthroned within the world of sound.

If I this jealous creature take,
And draw the bow across the string,
No demon shall such screechings make
As issue from my fingering !
In these my hands that lack the wit
To couple brain and heart and it,
'Tis but a dead and hollow toy ;—
In hers it lives, a voice of joy !

I would I had her cunning art
To tune and play on living strings,
To seek and find the world's lost heart,
And kindle charm in common things,
Till all life's ruined belfries chime,—
And sunless dials tell the time,—
As she makes worth their weight in gold
These vacant panels, centuries old.

And like her viol, tuned I'd be,
So that if goodness pass my way,
And deign to stoop and handle me,
I may not mar the heavenly lay.
Thrice happy lives, though all else fade,
On whom a Master touch is laid !
They render, lying in that hand,
Music too sweet to understand.

IDONEA.

VIRGINS, laugh no more, but weep
For Idonea, fall'n asleep :
Winter winds have ceased to stir,
All the world wears snow for her.

Cold, sad world, these saints so free
Tarry little space in thee !
Their true home is God's fair land,
None can take them from His hand.

Meed of tears she shall not miss,—
And a cross of eucharis
Lilies, and the winter rose,—
These shall mark the maid's repose.

Grecian sculptor might despair
Had he seen the darling fair :
Fra Angelico had wept,
Learning that this lady slept.

Wheresoe'er she moved serene
All our maidens held her queen ;
Her brown wealth of braided hair
Any diadem might wear.

Even death a light has shed
Round about this perfect head ;—
Who on Heaven could rely
If we thought that she could die ?

Little had her tender feet
Trod in this world's dusty street,—
They are white, and walk secure
In the gardens of the pure.

Who this star of virgins lit
He alone was worthy it ;
He has touched the sleeping maid,
She has followed unafraid.

We will don the mail of light,
Each whom Love has made a Knight,
Raising eyes, however dim
For Idonea, unto Him.

TO W. L.,

BORN ON INNOCENTS' DAY.

IT has taken twenty year
To bring this maid's perfection here :
Maiden such as heretofore
Realm of Britain never bore.
Cradled on a wintry day,
When the snowflakes, tired of play,
Slept on ground, and winds did fall,
And white beauty conquered all.

Young life, writ in letters quaint,
Bound in colours fair and faint,
Rare edition, where a few
Misprints could not anger you,
But only seem like tear-drops, dript
From an angel's eye on the manuscript :
If you con these young years o'er
You will pray for twenty more !

For her mind's with pictures hung
Of bright days whose songs are sung ;

Days 'neath Syrian cedars hid,
Days by antique pyramid,
Days where marble, white as she,
Taught her grace and symmetry,
And to furnish modern days
With an ancient's pretty ways.

She hath all save everything
That may make a singer sing ;
If, poor lad, he grows too grave,
Rippling laughter he will have,
But and if he change to gay,
Her tiny ear is his alway ;
And she'll tolerate the song
An he doth not sing too long !

When the twilight, robed in snow,
Rosy-finger'd dawn shall know ;
When the maiden's sparkling frost
In Love's morning light is lost,
And Love the Melter, rising higher,
Quickens Innocence with fire,—
Then she shall have everything
That need make a singer sing.

FLORA.

DO you see that boat,
Far across the bay ?
Flora's gone afloat
For an hour to-day.
Not a capful's blowing
Round her distant form,
While our Flora's rowing
Winds and waves reform.
Framed in sunny weather,
See ! she's rowing back,
Jewels from her feather,
White foam in her track ;
Down the shore to catch her,
As she leaps to land,
Is there maid to match her,
Head, or heart, or hand ?
Merry jest to know,
Perfect joy to gain—
Hair of ruddy glow,
Neck like porcelain.
Forehead straight and white,
Honest eyes, true blue,

Laugh, as if a light
Had been flashed on you !
Father's, brother's pet,
Buoyant as a lark,
Helpful, with teeth set,
When the home was dark.
When that shadow came
Did you sit and cry ?
No, your soul was flame,
But your eyes were dry.
Never idle sat,
Sent your heart to school,
Flora, it was that
Made you beautiful !

NOTRE DAME.

NOT up in cloudland, far aloft,
The Babe upon her arm,
Like Raphael's maiden, sweet and soft,
Half smile and half alarm,
Our Lady stands,—nay, from her skies
To earth our Queen steps down,
And daily seen of mortal eyes
She moves in London town.

Dark court and alley see her too,
Taking for kith and kin
A hungry and a houseless crew,
For all their filth and sin :
They hear her singing in the gloom
To lighten workrooms drear,—
And hearts grow young and flowers bloom
When the Madonna's near !

I've known her by her soft footfall,
—As once Æneas did—

Still as her shadow on the wall,—
No sleeper lifts a lid ;
See, in the women's ward she stands,
Over yon quiet bed
Leaning to kiss, while dying hands
Cling round the Sister's head !

She comes, like summer morning breath,
Into a Workhouse ward,
Where lives of failure wait for death,
Hopeless, and poor, and marred ;
And when she takes a little one
And clasps it to her breast,
She's grand as all that art has done,—
Our Lady manifest !

The town would be a dismal place,
This sad December night,
If we could see Madonna's face
Only by history's light !
On us, like wrecks off Sunium Cape,
In vain afar had shone
An ægis faint, a spectral shape,
A misty Parthenon.

But she has down among us come,
If we have eyes and wits,—
And see, beside this man at home
A very princess sits,—

And that has won a beauty born
Remote from painter's art,—
And this may kiss a queen each morn,
Or call a saint 'dear heart.'

And since Love's last behest to John,—
Her shield and sword to be,—
The homes in which this Star has shone
God's light reflected see.
To us, as in the servant's ear,
When Cana's cups were few,
She turns and whispers,—'Whatsoe'er
He saith unto you, do.'

A CHRISTMAS APPEAL.

THIS is the tide when a Virgin spent
A Christmas night with no Christmas cheer ;
But the young Child over whose sleep she bent
Had come to bring joy unto far and near ;
And win for the sake of that holy dame
Love from all women to women, He came.

And you are all curtained to-night from the cold,
Wondering what it is like to be poor,
While some, in their workrooms, soon to grow old,
Are longing to gaze through their sister's door,
And see how happy life is sometimes
To rich girls listening to Christmas chimes.

Christmas chimes in the ebb of the year
And the manger Idyll poisoned for these
By the money-scare and the sleepless fear—
That one of you in your selfish ease
Could bury for ever beneath this snow
With a few of the guineas you play with so.

Do you think the little that you can do
Scarce worth the doing,—best left undone ?
O glorious trifle,—to make old new,
To keep away tears and bring back the sun !
O priceless treasure, O joy most cheap,
To bring beauty and peace into eyes that weep !

Then on sweet Charity's wings alight
Where He is in want, and she is in woe,
Like the young angels that flew that night
To the Babe and the Maid, as all painters know.
And speed to our modern Bethlehem,
And be as the angels attending them.

Thrice happy are ye if, with Love's live fire,
The Christmas story your hearts inspire
To spare a little to bring to-day
One of her sisters to comfort's way ;
Ye shall hear the Babe say, from Mary's knee,
'Ye did it to Mine, ye did it to Me !'

RESPICE POST TE!

‘Sibi consul
Ne placeat, curru servus portatur eodem.’
Juvenal, Sat. X.

SANDALLED by the sun, the West wind
Every flaming altar fans,
For the leader of the eagles,
Darling of the Veterans.
Clash the timbrel for the Consul,
Crown with Massic to the brim ;—
Rome, the heart of all the nations,
Beateth proudly, all for him !

Tell it out, ‘Io Triumphe !’
All along the Sacred Way,
Shout until the Dacian warring
With the legions far away,
Hear the terror of the Consul
And the rumour of your war,—
Yet, for fear he dream of Godhead,
Let a slave be in the car.

So, while he, amid the praises
Tingling round the city wall,
Thinks at ease of Caledonia,
And the Tumult of the Gaul,
Let him hear the bondsman breathing,
'Man! remember!' so shall he
Not forget the path of dying
And the nothingness to be.

Look around thee! how Quirites
With the she-wolf in their veins,
Gloat upon thy proud vermilion,
Laurel bough, and gilded reins.
Look behind thee! hear the whisper,
Louder than a city's roar,
Of the Ferry's gloomy triumph,
Silent wraiths, and crowded shore.

ΝΕΦΕΛΟΚΟΚΚΤΡΙΑ.

MYRIAD birds are flown
In unending streams
To Cloudcuckootown,
In the Land of Dreams.
Yea, they hurry by,
Past cold Limbo's portal ;
Bones and feathers die,
Music is immortal.
On to Cuckootown,
Like the angels they,—
For their wings are grown
Ere they go that way,
Soaring on the wing
Carols strange and rare
Day and night they sing :—
No bad birds are there.

One by one all souls
Paying fees of breath
Pass the unknown shoals
Of the brook of Death ;

Fleeing unafraid
 Through grim Hades' portal,
 Grass and flowers fade,
 Spirits are immortal !
 Up and up through space
 Heavenward speed they
 Who have loved the place
 Ere they fare that way.
 There before the King
 Canticles most rare
 All the day they sing,—
 All the saints are there.

AT EDINBURGH.

EACH Highland lad that marched ere dawn was
near
To prove how quick Egyptian heels can run,
One claymore took to storm Tel-el-Kebir,
One, only one !

Men of renown, who mean to win the day
And draw life's prizes ere the game is done,
Follow one sole ambition, go one way,
One, only one !

And fair maids, fit for these men to desire,
Care not for crowds, where lover there is none,
But warm their heart before one true love's fire,
One, only one !

From yon grey battlements, at noon's decay,
Time warns the city by a lonely gun :—
A sword, a life, a love, is yours to-day,
One, only one !

IN A GLEN.

TO raise your head in this sweet place,
And feel the summer kiss your face,
And bask by tinkling waterfall
In bright Elysium, is not all.

Methinks the true of heart would stand
And feel in air, and sky, and land
Some hidden Presence haunt the beam,
Till all his thoughts illumined seem.

His mind within, the world outside,
Are like two peaceful realms allied,—
And Faith moves in and out between
The things that are and are not seen.

He, seeing how the flowers of earth
In their due season come to birth,
Grieves lest in his soul's garden plot
God look for fruit, and find it not.

Or hearing in a haunted glen,
Untraversed by wayfarer's ken,
Birds in the leafage singing soft,
High perched in their green organ-loft,—

Their life a song, unpaid and free,
A birk or larch for sanctuary,—
He emulates the simple part
That lifts so high such artless art.

Whenas the dawn shines out again
On Highlands dripping after rain,
And rays of morning fall empearled
In raindrops on the tearful world,

So has affliction's downpour grace
To mirror Heaven in his face,—
Love, when the storms have passed him by,
Turns griefs to gifts of sympathy.

He sees how joyful runs the burn
In cataracts that foam and churn,
To join the river running free
In ceaseless service to the sea.

The hum of life, the waving flowers
That deck its banks with fairies' bowers,
The quiet fish that in it swim,
Wake reverent thoughts of life in him.

And he would let his days downflow
To duty's levels, howe'er low,
And flee ambition's mountain ground,
Nor rest until Love's seas are found.

And as with self all rivers part
When lost within the Ocean's heart,
His sunny waves laugh on and leap
To merge in God's pacific deep.

Surely the Book, of Nature hight,
Is holy writ to holy sight ;
For such as con its Judgments o'er
It has Beatitudes in store.

IN LOCH LONG.

MY heart would sing the praise of Love
That fills all things that live and move
That warms the world and makes it sing,
And turns life's winter into spring.

Their shimmer fades from lesser lamps
When Luna on night's field encamps.
And so where Love is, all is day,
My eyes would look no other way

Send out thy light, O Love, on them,
For darkness wears a diadem,
Though day behind the world seems gone,
If starry eyes but gaze thereon.

Love hallows all the basking hills,
And gives their music to the rills,
Sunshine to boyhood's honest face,
And to old age untired grace.

Without him souls are lost in crowds,
And bridal robes are ghostly shrouds,
And converse has a hollow ring,
And Life's a Court without the King.

So while I sang, and in the breeze,
Love's name was whispered by the trees :
And on the loch the waves did sing,
The Alps of Arrochar echoing,

And mountain heights did seem to bear
Tufts of white heather everywhere,
And the clans' hills to the waves' brim
Were draped in tartan pride for him,—

The praise of Love I did rehearse,
Who fills with joy the Universe,
Making blind eyes see all things new,
Bathing in glory all the view !

‘LIEBESLIED.’

ON these waters, crystal paven,
Lines, as by a diamond graven,
Point across to Rothesay haven
Where the yachts would be.
But the breezes all are dreaming,
And the tide is idly streaming,
Loth to leave Clyde’s bosom gleaming
For the heart of sea.

Hark ! a ship the haze is rending,
Throbs her heart while seaward wending ;
In her wake the waters bending
Swell and rock for her.
Tell me, waves, while I am grieving
For the love that I am leaving,
Have I set her breast a-heaving
For the voyager ?

TO A BIGOT.

WILT thou divide the false and true,
As one that sorteth Autumn leaves
Forgetful that the web God weaves
Is myriad laced of myriad hue ?

Canst thou the altar rail descry
Along the marge of sultry days
Which hide, 'neath bridal veil of haze,
The marriage of the sea and sky ?

When thou canst fetter clouds to form
And trim the fringes of their sails,
Or teach one litany to gales,
One plain-song to the voice of storm,

Then may'st thou preach the noble strife
Is vain, which owns not thy war cry,
And that the lane thou crawlest by
Is the sole highroad up to life.

At whose behest hast thou erased
The Charter by which all are freed ?
To prove the bye-laws of thy creed
A Revelation were a waste.

Heroes are warring with the hosts
Of sin upon the inland plains
While thou art wasting life's campaigns
On misty frontier lines, with ghosts.

Canst thou the weather forecast scan ?
See, Love's sirocco comes, whose torch
Shall flame along the world, to scorch
The laurels of the partisan.

THE INVASION OF CHAOS.

NO ear was listening as the column trod,
No eye was watching when the battles met,
Or when the lordless rout of gloom beset
Shrank from the lances of the host of God.

His embassies ran on from star to star,
And wider grew the frontier of the day ;
They bore the gift to all, nor heeded they
That some were near His Throne, and some were far.

They set the solar heraldry unfurled
On each new conquest, and then forward flew :
So to us men the couriers nearer drew,
And lo ! the primal morning of this world.

Then on, with wings of flame upon their feet,
They bore the dawn to slumberers in space,
Set Mars aglow before bright Venus' face,
And hung with lanterns all the Milken Street.

And still we watch the skies for signallings,
 Flashed from new worlds, the prizes of the host,—
 —They said that Uranus was uttermost,—
Deem ye that Neptune is the end of things ?

On, on, unwearied by the eternal years,
 Along the leagues of chaos light is borne,
 Each æon brings some outer star its morn,
Age after age the Night new jewels wears.

Badges of conquest on her breast they glow,
 As she goes forth, sparkling with spoil of war,
 Like some dark queen behind the victor's car,
Herself the herald of her overthrow.

Her sleep is broken, for her eyes behold
 The torch of him who slumbers not nor tires,
 Her dreams are haunted by undying fires,
Sparks from the anvil that is never cold.

And while new constellations learn of day,
 Shall souls that sit in darkness be forgot ?
 No, for He seeks for such as seek Him not,—
That same true Light who saved us on His way.

Look up, and see God's conquest of the gloom !
 He rests not till the world of worlds is His,
 Eternity His Kingly palace is,
Through which He wanders, lighting every Room.

Behind the stars still lurks the league of night,
Earth, half her time, revolves bereft of Him,
Yet shall He reign till there is nothing dim,
Nor any crypt beneath the Home of Light !

SONNETS.

THE SONNET.

THE first line of a sonnet is a door
 Into a room from Fancy's entrance hall,—
 A little room,—so narrow, that the wall
Just holds one picture from the tenant's store.
Yet see! 'tis but a mirror, set before
 The window-pane, and as you turn to find
 What made the frame so meet, and you so blind,
You view realities he loves still more.

For towards the end he throws the window wide
 To catch a glimpse of beauty's seeds upspringing,
Trim paths of pleasantness that need no guide,
 Where to Truth's stem imagination's clinging
Like ivy ;—till you fain would fare outside,
 For overhead you hear the heavens singing.

THE KINGCRAFT OF LOVE.

A KING would try His servants on a day,
And, none suspecting, in the street was seen
A mendicant of most unroyal mien,
Who with no empty wallet passed away.

One, offering all he had, went poor for Him ;
One gave Him silver though he carried gold ;
One gave Him a godspeed ; and one was bold
To throw Him coin debased, and clipt of rim.

But when the King returned in robe and crown,
He that went poor was only poor a day :
But whoso stinted Him, or said Him nay,
He entered Knight, but left the presence clown.

Love leaves His court to look for lovers true,
And, masked Himself, unmask His retinue.

LOVE'S REFUSAL.

LAST summer-time I heard the folk complain
Because the Sun, returning to his own,
Cared not to win with smiles what they had sown,
But brooded in unkindly cloud and rain,
And the sad season naught to him would yield
Who, like a churl, so scorned the wealth untold
That needed but his glance to turn to gold
The freewill-offering of the harvest field.

Chill hearts, whose fires are low, whose light is dim,
Even stray smiles—Love's usurers—oft have won
A mighty harvest at a little cost.
Love gives not till ye crave a gift of Him.
Kill not His kindness by the untimely frost
That cheats the Brethren of their summer sun.

MAY-DAY IN MAGDALEN.

THE lark is up, and at her matin call
The white choir runs aloft, to greet the May ;
Ere evil stirs abroad, they chant a lay,
To consecrate the fairest month of all.
And early angels in this streaming light
High poised above the Belfry, wondering
To hear how sweet earth's sons of morning sing,
Droop condescending toward the Tower's height.

Hark, while morn drops upon the meadow green
Bright beads of dew for all her flowers to wear,—
As mothers throw their jewels on the hair
Of maidens sent to bow before the Queen,—
She comes,—the hymn goes up, the joybells swing,
And all the cloisters of the valley ring !

ON A RICHLY BOUND MISSAL.

HERE is a Book, which, as I gaze thereon,
Shines with a gilded edge, but if you break
Into its myriad of leaves, they take
A sudden flush, till all the gold is gone.

Here is a Life, laid open long ago,
And lo ! the leaves are deep incarnadined.
Where is the light that once the pages lined,
Which tempted me to open, read, and know ?

The rash of evil on the book is seen,
And blushes forged by shame upon the face,
Fevers excited in unworthy chase,
Scald of regret for good that might have been.

Hail, sacred Hand, that wore the crimson stain,
Wherein life's leaves when closed are gold again !

AT WHITEFRIARS GLASSWORKS.

HE showed me furnaces of cruel heat
And broken glass not wasted, for of such
Are goblets made for lips of kings to touch,
Opaline treasures for the banquet meet,
And lancets soon to glow with saintly dames,
And groups of maids with olive groves between,
Mirrors for beauty, cups of rainbow sheen,
And lamps for altars, purified by flames.

So from hot kiln unto the cooling cup
I followed, till we won a Paradise
Of crystals fashioned like the Holy Grail ;
Forgetful of past woe, safe, treasured up,
Trophies of loving care, and moulding wise,
And tender dealing for the fair and frail.

*DR. CORFE'S WINDOW AT CHRIST
CHURCH.*

IN Oxford, where all good and evil meet,
A Doctor in her schools of holy song,—
Hard by that window where poor people throng
The crimson panes, to kiss Saint Frideswide's feet,—
Has set his own Saint in fair tracery
Who christened Harmony for evermore,
Nearest the altar ; so that eastward floor
On summer mornings glows for Cecily.

And though this world would make the Muse again
Heathen, or martyr her,—while some, within
The folds of goodness, holding art half sin
Would grudge the palm-branch to the saintly slain,—
Yet, in life's morning, every Muse's face
Shines fairest near to life's most holy place !

PRINCIPAL SHAIRP AT OXFORD.

BACK from his northern University,
Poet of Highland brac and strath and flood,
Back from hard work for Scotland and for God,
Oxford recalled her son, that we might see
What manner of man she fain would have us be,—
Friend of all goodness and of all good men ;
And,—whether found in palace or in glen,—
With all high thought and health at home was he.

So he returned, whose youth around him clung
As fresh as when he sang that brotherhood
Of scholars half a century ago.
His poet soul was like as the hills he sung
Strong and near heaven, and his every mood
Soared, like cloud wraiths that cling to peaks
of snow.

PROVEN!

METHOUGHT I would subject all maids I
 know
 To an ordeal mathematical
 Wherein you should compete, and each and all
Should hold whatever place the tale might show.

So fancy summoned them,—fair brows of snow,
 Beautiful faces, lips with witchery sweet,
 Voices and forms that made my heart to beat—
Young Paris never saw such charms arow.—

I marked for goodness and for goodliness,
 For wells of comfort, and for keenest wit,
 Music, and love, and all that fosters it,
And then cast up the scores in vague distress ;

Yet, O my lady, need the rest be said ?
I laughed for joy,—you were so far ahead !

THE HUNGER OF THE WORLD.

IF we believed that every heart on earth
Is as a miser keen to clutch and hoard
Love's half unconscious alms—kind look or word
Forgotten oft as soon as come to birth,—

How loneliness holds all of little worth
Compared with kindness of kindred hearts,
And how, in stress of life and noise of marts,
One smile at morn can fill the day with mirth.

Then would such misers find us all our days
Spendthrifts of love, that grows by scattering,—
Love that pays millions for the meanest thing,
Measuring its value by the price it pays.

All hearts are hungry—wilt thou spare a crumb?
Of all philosophy this is the sum.

TO SIR FREDERICK YOUNG, K.C.M.G.

WHEN a colonial trireme, sailing down
Towards holy Athens, to Peiræus came,
Each man aboard of her one friend might claim
Within the City of the Violet Crown,—
—The Proxenus : although they ne'er had come
From Greater Greece across the watery ways
On the Acropolis before to gaze,
He greeted all and each with ' Welcome Home.'

So you in London, voice, and heart, and pen ;—
—Your dream, United Empire,—your delight
To grasp colonial hands,—upon the Veldt
Outspanning at full threescore years and ten !—
And like some old Elizabethan knight
At length before the Empress-Queen you knelt.

RUTH.

*Listen, ye minstrels, to an old world rede,
At first a dirge, then meet for gleemen gay,
How backward rays, from Christ the Light indeed,
Reveal a star three thousand years away.
Listen, ye heralds, to a pastoral lay
Shall show you one of mean and alien birth
Enrolled a princess of His line on earth.*

*Nor need your minds make shift to paint a scene
All Eastern strangeness and antique array,
For there are sisters of this heroine
Familiar to your modern ken to-day—
Love sows in tears and reaps in joy alway,
Love's harvests are alike in every clime,
Or sung in Hebrew or in English rhyme.*

*Pilgrims, upon her way of sorrows still,
Who have found all in Moab lost and vain,
Led out, perchance, by Love, against your will,
To find the Land of Rest,—from loss to gain,
To glean in undreamed light, unhopèd for grain,
Take heart, and gaze on Rutl's untroubled brow,
Singing Magnificat with Mary now.*

RUTH.

I.

ON three lone women, of all love bereft,
The sun in Moab's gardens shines in vain.
The food is taken and the hunger left,
Three loved ones gone, three broken hearts remain.
And one, true mother to the other twain,
Lifts widowed hands to bless each widowed head
Whose Joy and Ornament of life are fled.

II.

' Turn again, daughters,—let me go my way
To Judah's Land ; Love's new awakening
Shall surely dry the tears of yesterday :
Turn,—ere your Moab valleys dance and sing,
Turn,—ere the youth the homeward vintage bring.
Would God that unto me more sons were born
To wed this day with sweetness so forlorn !

III.

Then, as they clung and wept, 'It is enough.
Back to the Land 'twas sin to leave, I go.
It skilleth not to age if roads be rough ;
The famine drove me thence, where now o'erflow
Blessings of bread, and I no lack shall know.
The Lord deal kindly with you both,' she said,
'As ye have dealt with me and with the dead !'

IV.

Before stood hunger, plenteousness behind,
And bridal rest amid the scenes of youth ;
And Orpah wept, to Love's high challenge blind,
But open-eyed before the weary truth,
And with embraces turned ; but as for Ruth,
O listen,—every word a holy kiss !
Did ever woman speak so sweet as this ?

V.

'Intreat me not to leave thee, or return
From following after thee ! for I will go
Whither thou goest ; and to lodge I yearn
Where thou shalt lodge—no other home to know.'
—Then did her passion take a holier glow—
'Thy people mine shall be, thy God I take
To be my God, for love and duty's sake.

VI.

' And, mother mine, where death to thee shall call,
There will I die, there shall they bury me.
The Lord do so to me, and worse befall,
If ever aught but death part me and thee !'
So did she choose for love and loyalty.
And as her eyes shone with heroic will,
Naomi saw her steadfast, and was still.

VII.

O broken lives with disenchantment sore,
Ideals, dreams, and hopes all writ in sand,
Rejoice that Moab is your home no more.
Look up,—Love stands and beckons with the hand,
And Duty still may bring you to God's Land.
Still may ye share his people's harvesting,
And learn the songs the happy reapers sing.

VIII.

Only to bring a fearless, humble mind
Kindled for sacrifice, is asked of you ;
Only to leave the wasted years behind,
And welcome many toils and pleasures few
Till the bright uplands break upon your view.
There ye may win, unless weak will have swerved,
More than fond heart desired or deserved.

IX.

So onward, youth and age, they two must walk,
Footsore and heartsore, unto Bethlehem,
To be choice morsels for a city's talk,
With hands to point but not to succour them.
'And woe is me, whom God and home condemn!
Call me now Mara,—bitter meed I earn,
Who went out full, so empty to return!'

X.

Thus broke Naomi's heart as she made moan,
Knowing all joyance fled, all grief begun.
But like as Luna sails the sky alone,
Beaming more clear when other light is done,
So Ruth, her moon, shone on that darkened one.
'Courage,' she said, 'with Boaz of thy kin
Let me go glean, and haply favour win.'

XI.

So for pure love she chose to suffer there
Affliction with God's people, but to meet
No welcome home, nor kith to hold her dear—
Braving chance wanton eyes and words unmeet,—
A stranger in her Mahlon's native street,—
To keep the home above his mother's head,
Fighting with penury for daily bread,

XII.

Yet see how duty to her lovely face
New beauty brings as she a-gleaning goes !
They scarce can reap for gazing on her grace,—
The corn she stoops for with a queen's repose
Seems golden tribute, and the bending rows
Of sheaves her court ; the sad heart grows more glad
Than when in wealth more earthly joys she had.

XIII.

Now while she gleaned, the Lord of that sweet place
Passed with kind words that blessed amid his folk,
And coming on her where with downcast face
She took the Earth's scant alms, he stayed and
spoke,
And pity first in that brave heart awoke.
Learning her simple tale of faith and tears,
Then joy, to know his kinship linked with hers.

XIV.

'Glean not,' said he, 'upon another's ground,
But bide, my daughter, where our maidens are.
And let all courteous kindness hedge her round,
And warn all clownish harvesters afar
From any field where shines this lonely star.
And let her share cool cups when noon is hot.'
So for this lady did that true knight plot.

XV.

Then she, with meek obeisance at his feet,
‘Why, since I am a stranger, have I won
Such grace from thee?’ whereat his words came fleet,
‘It hath been shown me all that thou hast done
To mingle mother tears and thine in one,
Forgetting fatherland to follow her,
For piety’s dear sake a wanderer ;

XVI.

‘The Lord shall recompense for all these things ;
Yea, may my God, the God of Israel,
Beneath the shadow of whose mighty wings
Thy heart hath come to trust, requite thee well.’
‘Ah, good, my lord, fain would thy handmaid
dwell,’
Quoth she, ‘in favour that can so befriend
Me, whose strange looks might e’en thy maids offend.

XVII.

‘Among the damsels who is like to me ?
Well at the alien may the reapers stare.’
‘True words, with me interpreter,’ thought he ;
For who could with the loveliness compare
That made a thrall of him, a queen of her ?
Then did he envy all the youth their years,
That he might crown her his, and wipe her tears.

XVIII.

E'en were I nearest kin, age makes me far—
Can Morn and Eve in the same heavens glow,
Daybreak and Sundown? Shall a man of war
Mate with this dove, unfledged not long ago?'
So he refrained his soul and kept it low,
And quiet schemes for her refection laid,
Keeping his love in honour's ambuscade.

XIX.

Pity that reigns within the heart of God
Made knightly reticence her almoner,—
For, to make gleanings richer where she trod,
He bade his men leave fallen handfuls near,
But kept his hand, the giver's, hid from her;
Too true to take advantage of her woe,
Too proud to capture free allegiance so.

XX.

And thus she gleaned afield till eventide,
And, with full measure for all needs, returned
Through the gate home, where by Naomi's side
She nestled, telling all with cheeks that burned
Not with the sun alone, how want had turned
To plenteous store, with Boaz there to friend
Till wheat and barley harvest should have end.

XXI.

So, while all summer-time these mourners two
Took with meek hands the food his reapers doled,
The harvest moon into a sickle grew,
Spending her silver, while Earth yielded gold
To bless the works of men, and God unrolled
His scroll of faithful gifts for faithful toil,
Crowning the year with fruit and wine and oil.

XXII.

Then said Naomi, 'Daughter, let me find
Rest for thy heart that life may dawn anew.
Surely thy kinsman, if thou hast a mind,
By law must wed thee.' Well the mother knew
Love had been sowing all the harvest through,
And that the reaping time to Love had come,
And to Ruth's empty heart its harvest home.

XXIII.

'Behold, to-night within his threshing-floor
He winnoweth the barley, and will keep
Watch o'er his wealth, to frighten from the door
The wiles that wake while honesty's asleep.
There, like a dream amid his slumbers deep,
Under night's bridal veil before him be,
And wait for words that he shall speak to thee.'

XXIV.

What marvel if the Rose of Moab blushed,
Hearing from lips so dear such strange command?
Must modesty at duty's call be hushed?
Is wrong in Moab right in Judah's Land?
Was it for this she crossed the salt sea's sand?
And faith in Israel's God and Israel's Law
Faded, till shame was all she felt or saw.

XXV.

And yet the mother's wit had reckoned well,
Since love from loving eyes can ne'er be hid;
For trust in his bright honour weaved a spell,
Nor could her thoughts of memory's proofs be rid
Of Boaz, and the silent deeds he did
To be her shield, yet keep his love unknown,
So, lest she lose it, she betrays her own.

XXVI.

'Unless I beckon, he will let no sign
Escape, for fear I seek some stripling's heart.
Then will I go and show him he is mine,
Yet only seem to claim a kinsman's part.
Mother, my life's own guiding star thou art.'
So, whispering, 'Yea, I will arise and go,'
Her pent heart yields in tearful overflow.

XXVII.

Then did she deck herself with raiment meet,
And through the purple night of Bethlehem crept,
All clothed in innocence, with hurrying feet
That scarcely waked the flowers where she stept,
Unto the floor, and waited while he slept,
Till he awoke to see her kneeling there,
And his brave heart was filled with love and fear.

XXVIII.

Love,—for he blessed her, saying, ‘Surely thou
More kindness now than at the first hast shown,
I warrant, deaf to many a young man’s vow
To guard the wells of peace for me alone.’
Fear,—lest he ne’er might call that heart his own.
For there was one whose kinship nearer came,
And how could man renounce so sweet a claim?

XXIX.

‘Rest here, tired heart, until the day shall break,
And if this kinsman will redeem thee, well.’
So bowed he to what God should send or take.
‘But if not, bring the sunshine where I dwell,
And Love shall buy what only Love can sell.’
Then, with her good name safe, she left the place
Before a man could see another’s face.

XXX.

Now all was won, but all might yet be lost,
If by that other she be homeward led ;
Whom at the Gate he straightway doth accost,
And bids redeem the land of him, the dead,
With Ruth of Moab : but that kinsman said,
'To wed strange women naught dare I redeem.'
So unto fools God's blessings curses seem.

XXXI.

Then rose up Boaz of the valiant heart,
And claimed as right the prize already won.
And, while the people blessed, did straight depart
To Ruth and home ; and ere the gold was spun
To clothe new harvest lands, her little one
Laughed in Naomi's arms, and was to her
A sevenfold joy, her worn life's comforter.

XXXII.

And when the fulness of the time had come,
And Christ the Babe of Bethlehem was seen,
This infant's line He scorned not, nor the home
Once ruled by Ruth who only came to glean.
Then deck your Christmas hearth with evergreen
For Him who came among us, not apart,
With naught that's human alien from His heart.

XXXIII.

For to us Gentiles, whereof Ruth was named,
He links Himself by a dear human tie,
Taking for kinsmen sinners, not ashamed
To call us brethren,—for His granary
Waits for more store than Israel could supply.
Bidding His Church, like Ruth, glean near His side,
Till He, the Lord of Harvest, claims His Bride.

OCCASIONAL VERSES.

TO PRAXITELES,

WHO HAD OFFERED TO ORGANISE A CONCERT IN
AID OF KING'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL. FROM
THE SECRETARY.

ἔφριξ' ἔρωτι.

S HREWD wit thou hast, Praxiteles,
For high-built domes and sounding keys,
But not the arras on thy wall,
Nor carven panel in thy hall,
Thy cunning work from over sea,
Thy fancies done in carpentry,
Thy Muse that moveth in the mart
To harmonize the world by Art,
Till lifeless wealth and loveless eyes
Discern the god in merchandise,—
Not for all these shall Love's decree
Bid Hebe lay a place for thee,
Or set thee burning like a star
Where Pallas and the Paphian are ;
Thou canst not win to those high feasts
For all thy plinths and anapæsts !

For, O thou young Praxiteles,
Acanthos-bearded, naught of these
So thrilled me as to see thee stand
Before these dwellings, lyre in hand,
Offering to Asklepios
To catch the rich and win their dross—
Wherewith alone his works are sped—
By having Orphics heralded,
An extra liturgy to take
And train a chorus for his sake,
And win him gold of them that hear,
Thyself his victim Chanticleer !

Know then, by these our Elders send
All greeting to the Healer's friend,
And do command their thanksgiving
To him that trains and them that sing,
To him that sweeps the golden chords,
To ladies' notes and noise of lords
Who lord it in the realm of song,—
To all who to thy choirs belong,
Craving from Zeus all joy for those
Who serve by song the city's woes.

*TO ONE QUESTIONING CONCERNING THE PERSON OF
FREDERICK THE DEACON.*

IT ill beseems the layfolk thus to play
At ordnance-survey on a cassocked clerk,
Whose reverend inches—seventy-eight and more—
Serve as a pillar for our holy Church,
And an advertisement of godliness
Above the shoulders of the common herd.
Yet if so be that ye will have it so,
I bear with thee, to calm this strife of tongues
Which had been better wagging at your prayers.

Know then, that to the best of my belief,
The mighty deacon whom ye saw yestreen,—
Being my brother,—came to Infandom
I' the year o' the world last christen'd 'sixty-one,'
Upon the twenty-second dawn o' March
(Month of east wind, and of the maniac hare).
Whereby it follows—if ye can do sums,—
That the new March will turn him twenty-five.

So cease to wrangle, nor dismay the peace
With carnal guesses at a deacon's age,
As men hold parley with a puppy's mouth
To rede a riddle pups may never tell,—
Being dumb beasts,—how old the varlet be.

Frederick, the fourth of a good mother's sons,
His father eke a venerable priest
Being this day, for which the Saints be praised,—
Both strong to labour and of tender heart ;
A Canon in the Church on Lincoln Hill,
Moreover beneficed at Kersal Cell,
By holy Newstead monks enriched of old.
He put this stripling, now a lengthy boy,
To school to learn his book, and thence to push
His fortunes 'mid the noise of them that forge,—
Old Vulcan's handicraft of engineers,—
Which toil did breed in Frederick heart of oak,
And gnarled muscle, and a pretty wit
That gave and took with merry artisans.

Yet we, his brethren, seeing that he lost
No godliness—(albeit cleanliness
Must needs forsake the man that plays the smith)—
And knowing well what power in the world,
Made of such stuff, a learned priest might be,
Did set our hearts to compass home and him
To suffer him be sent to Oxenford ;
Where with his book again he donned the Clerk
And parsed and construed in the Latin tongue

And learned the Holy Gospels through in Greek,—
(This gentle smith, this scholar artisan,)—
And frowned amid the theses of the schools,
And probed the ethic of the Stagyrte,
Until they dubbed him Bachelor of Arts,
And friends thronged in to grasp the boy's big hand,
No more begrimed with driving rivets home,—
Clean hand all ready for the holy war.

Then the great Scholar by the Bank of Wear,
Joseph the Bishop of the Princely See,
Took him and trained him up within his Court,
And taught him all the questions of the Creeds,
And how to win the layfolk to the Christ,
And the best sorts of bait to hook men's souls,
And how the learned reach the simple best ;
And then he laid his hands upon his head,
(The giant Frederick stooping wondrous low,)
Within the glorious minster by the Wear.
And he was deacon,—sent to stand and serve
Before the altar of the Parish Church
In Bishopwearmouth, by the bones of Bede.
Where now he preaches unto fisher folk,
(A use that hath good Gospel precedent,)
Going afloat with beaten mariners,
And, holding all he hath of small account,
Is highly reckoned on about that coast
By common folk, and sick, and sad, and poor.
For help as true by furnaces of pain
As at the anvil where he wrought of old.

PROLOGUE

FOR A PERFORMANCE OF CASTE IN AID OF A
COTTAGE HOSPITAL AT EAST MOLESEY. SPOKEN
BY MR. CRESWICK.

'T WAS said of old that all theatric Art
Had one high aim, to purify the heart,—
To perfect Pity, and to chasten Fear,
By bringing joy or tribulation near,
That so the audiences might go away
To act more boldly in life's real play,
With hearts prepared for living sufferings
By visions of the "tears in earthly things."
And though our play vaunts no high hopes like
these
To-night we do not only play to please,
And I am sent in front ere we begin
To crave your leave to throw the moral in.
For well we know that all the house is full
Of loyal servants of the golden Rule ;—
Not yours the cynic scorn that lives and thrives
To leave the world no better for your lives,

To let Love's chances lie, to please yourselves,
Like wormy volumes high on dusty shelves,
To seek a playhouse with a tearless eye,
And giggle in a stall while heroes die !

Our poets, when Parnassus they invade
Invoke the Muse—but she, the self-willed maid,
Will not be always at your beck and call,—
She helped the play,—but mercy !—after all
She tender'd for no Prologue up to date,—
Prologues weren't mentioned in the estimate !
Then back to Helicon, reluctant jade !
And we'll invoke thy youngest sister's aid.
Nine Muses once sufficed,—they now are ten,
For Memory's had another child since then ;—
She is the Muse of Charity, whose grace
Redeems sad modern life from commonplace.
Impressed into Love's gentle war she brings
The author's pen, and the composer's strings ;
She sings of aid for pain in life and limb,
Haunts nurses' vigils when the wards are dim,
Paints pictures in a Children's Hospital,
Empties the garret, fills the Concert Hall,
Sending her servants to the East End singing,
Setting new bells in gloomy cities ringing,
Faring abroad foretelling better times,
Laughter and sunshine, madrigals and chimes,
And tears she brings at home among the poor
Because none told them of this Muse before !

And here to-night she calls on sane and sound,
On wealth and health, to join their hands, and found
A Cottage Hospital ; we players play
To do her service, though in stage array.
She prays you each to bear some little loss
To bring it gain, and send the Fiery Cross—
Token of burning love—to far and near,
And summon Mercy's reinforcements here.

Kind-hearted dames, who like the Mother mild,
Have borne and nursed, or ever loved a child,
And brave and sporting men of heart, and boys,
And maidens, messengers of Love's best joys,
Layfolk and parson, high and low, herein
Are on a level high as man can win ;
For here ye tread the floor of that wide Home
Where all who love the brotherhood have come,
Where they shall know, who only dreamed before,
How open is the house and wide the door
Of Happiness, to those whose sympathy
Makes purse-strings break, and clever fingers ply,
With gifts of head, and health, and heart, to prove
That though the world is old, the world can love.

These view the work of Pain in myriad form,
They drag self's anchors, and essay the storm.
Science arrests the drifting of disease,
And Nursing tows the wreck to calmer seas,

With Love's bright offerings speeding every cure,
To make health's new found anchorage secure,
Till surgeon, nurse and visitor unfold
The creed of Love that's nineteen centuries old !

We know the parts our prompter makes us learn,—
Now let us be your prompters too in turn,
And teach you yours,—for each some part must
play,
Helper or marplot, in our scheme to-day.
To-night each actor is a mendicant,
And, if we please you, the applause we want
Is not the noise that empty hands bestow,
But deeds of Pity for your brethren's woe.
The secret of a Hospital that thrives
Is sacrifice of purse, brains, hearts and lives.
Let each playgoer here from stalls to pit
Learn Mercy's lesson, and make proof of it ;
And let this maxim in East Molesey last
' They who forget our Hospital lose Caste !'

A FAREWELL.

DAT TAMESIS CLOTÆ VENERIQUE MINERVA
SALUTEM.

THE voice of Oxford greeteth you
Ere a swift week too soon has died ;
Listen, and take the tribute due
From Isis to the marge of Clyde.

This city of an elder day
Has watched you through the loving hours,
Thinking upon her stones alway,
Telling her bulwarks and her towers.

Your gentle memory shall abide,
Not like the winds that no man sees,
Which in November hurrying glide,
Like rustling silks, from out the trees,

But as the notes of organs dwell
In echo round our chapel walls,
Like songs within an ocean shell,
After the perfect anthem falls.

For such as you in summer-time
All Oxford town holds carnival,
Trinity decks her crypt of lime,
And gardens glow by Wykeham's wall,

And lamps in Magdalen mock the night,
Each glowing like the white-orbed moon ;
Quadrangles catch the strange starlight
Of ladies' eyes that grace the June.

For Oxford's best, bereft of you,
Were hearts of stone and heads of fools,
No better than yon grinning crew
That guards the precincts of her Schools.

Ye teach her more than founders can ;
Her gloomy cloisters hail the light
Whose presence maketh better man
As well of scholar as of knight.

NOTES.

IONA.

LINE

- Page 13.—‘*Vir.*’ The Earl of Selborne, who gained the Newdigate Prize as an undergraduate at Trinity, with his Poem on Staffa.
3. ‘Fantastic shapes.’ Of these the most characteristic is Bach, better known as ‘the Dutchman’s Cap.’ It has been well compared to a floating shield with an ‘umbo’ in the centre.
17. ‘Long since Clanranald.’ The chief of Clanranald himself set fire to his own castle before marching, in 1715, to the battle of Sheriff-muir, that Argyle might be unable to sack it during his absence.
23. ‘Duart,’ a fortress of the Macleans; ‘Mingarry,’ of the Clanranald. The tomb of the Maclean lies before the altar of Iona Cathedral. ‘Within this sanctuary also lye the maist part of the Lords of the Iles, with ther lynage. Twa clan Leans with ther lynage—with sundrie other inhabitants of the haille Iles.’ [Dean Monro, 1594.]
39. ‘Beneath the cross.’ It is written of Columba, ‘There went not from the world one who was more continual for the remembrance of the cross.’ [Amra Choluih Cille.]
69. See Keats’ Life, 1818, July 26.

LINE

70. For the well-known passage by the earliest of Iona's modern pilgrims inspired by his visit to the island, and Boswell's remark on it, see the latter's journal of their Hebridean tour, Tuesday, Oct. 19.
85. 'Torr Abb,' the Abbot's mound, whence Columba is said to have uttered his famous prophetic benediction on Iona. Cf. Adamnan, lib. iii. cap. xxiii.
89. 'Clear chanted hymns,' &c. Standing on one side of the Sound of Iona, while he sent some of the brethren across the water, Columba would sing with them the Psalms antiphonally.
- 'The sound of Colum Cille's voice--
Great its sweetness above all Clerics.
To the end of fifteen hundred paces,
Though vast the distance, so far 'twas heard.'
99. Macbeth is buried in Iona; Hallfred, King Olaf's poet, was washed ashore in his coffin here, and lies quietly in the ground his heathen kinsman had ravaged.
113. The Shian Hill, the Fairies' Mound. Columba himself called Iona 'the Island of the Angels.'
153. 'Hiisdem diebus sanctus, cum duodecim commilitionibus discipulis ad Britanniam transnavigavit.' *Vita S.S.*
161. 'Lest earthborn mists,' &c. On Columba's love for Ireland, from which he had been exiled after a war with Diarmid, king of Tara, who had decided against him the matter of his copy of St. Finan's Psalter, see Adamnan, lib. i. cap. xlix.
- 'There is a gray eye
That views Erin backwards.
It will not see henceforth
The men of Erin, or its women.'
171. 'Arran.' This sacred island was inhabited by a certain St Moliq, a disciple of Columba. A cave in the red sandstone is still pointed out as his ascetic abode.

LINE

177. 'Holy well.' Those who have travelled over the isle of Arran will remember a well at the head of Glen Rosa, sacred to Columba.
183. 'But yesterday.' Staffa remained unnoticed by, if not unknown to modern travellers till late in last century.
203. 'New Iona.' Lindisfarne, on the coast of Northumbria.
208. 'Straight roads' Κελευθόποιοι παῖδες—Χριστοῦ.
213. 'Whitby.' In 664 the rival claims of the Celtic and Gregorian missions were decided in favour of Rome at the Council of Streonesheale, or Whitby. The main questions at issue were of no deeper importance than the day for the celebration of Easter, and the correct fashion of the tonsure. After that, the Celtic wave of Christianity retired from Northumbria.
221. 'The rival founts.' Dean Hook in his 'Lives' [vol. i. Introd.], says, 'We do not ignore the Celtic Church, but as an historical fact, we regard it as absorbed in the patriarchate of Canterbury.'
236. St. Martin's Cross is not actually in the Reilig Odhrain, but in the Cathedral yard near it. The marble slab of the altar has been rifled, piece by piece, by seamen and pilgrims; not a vestige remains.
253. 'Tis not on relics.' The only relic of Columba is the Cathac [a Psalm Book], written by his own hand, which is now at Dublin. [For an illustration of his penmanship, see the word 'Iona' on the cover.]
273. 'The Family of Hy' was the name by which the early Columban settlement went, bringing from Scotia the characteristic idea of the clan, which marks old Irish institutions, religious as well as social. See Skene's Celtic Scotland, vol. ii. Church and Culture.
275. 'Quando ille albus necnon argenteus Columbanus animus in Columbarium beatorum advolavit.' *Vita S.S.*
281. 'Isle of my heart'—this is a translation of a song of Columba, in Gaelic, beginning, 'I mo cridhe, I mo graidh.'

LINE

290. 'The white hand of Oswald.' Oswald was doing acts of charity when St. Aidan seized his right hand, and cried, 'May this hand never grow old;' and even after the St. Louis of the crusade against Penda died, in the war in Northumbria, the white hand did not wither.
322. 'The weary world.' The accidental order of some of Wordsworth's sonnets in one of his Scotch Tours seems aptly to illustrate the conflicting contrast which forces itself on the traveller in Iona between those island silences and the world's turmoil. One sonnet is on Iona, the one after it is on Greenock! [Sonnets on a Tour in 1833, xxxv. and xxxvi.]

THE INVASION OF CHAOS.

20. Neptune, the farthest planet of the Solar system, discovered simultaneously by Adams in Cambridge and Leverier in Paris, making Uranus, till then considered the farthest, only second.

RUTH.

7. 'Joy and Ornament'—the signification of the names of their husbands, Mahlon and Chilion, the sons of Elimelech,
229. 'Taking for kinsmen sinners.' Rahab, Tamar, Bathsheba, Ruth. These names occur in the genealogy of our Lord, as though to enhance the humiliation of the Incarnation.

PROLOGUE TO CASTE.

1. 'Twas said of old.' Aristotle Poetics. 'Aristotle's Definition of Tragedy.' 'Tragedy, therefore, is the imitation of a theme fraught with human interest and complete in itself, by means of pity and fear bringing about the purification of such like passions.' 'Tears in earthly things.' Virg., *Æn.*, *Sunt lacrymæ rerum.*



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